

Testimony of Jennifer Carroll  
Friday, February 15, 2013  
Before the  
Appropriations Committee  
Commenting on:

Governor Malloy's Budget – Department of Developmental Services

Good Evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jennifer Carroll. I am a member of the Council on Developmental Services for DDS and the Connecticut Family Support Council. My husband and I live in Glastonbury with our four children ranging in age from 12 to 19. Our son, Jamie, is 18 years old and is diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. He has significant intellectual disabilities, he is nonverbal and he requires help with every aspect of his day-to-day life. Jamie is a consumer of DDS services and our family is tremendously grateful for and reliant upon the support Jamie receives from DDS. This support is vital now and will be more vital as he gets older, and more importantly, as we get older.

We embrace our role as Jamie's parents, as advocates for his needs and as partners to DDS and the State system that supports our family. We have taught our three daughters about advocacy, involved them in decisions about Jamie's care and have begun to prepare them for a day when we may no longer be able to care for Jamie. We have promised our daughters that DDS and the State system will help them to support their brother. We are here today to ask you to keep the future for Jamie, his sisters, and families like ours in mind. We fear what the impact of annualizing the rescissions and cuts within the deficit mitigation plan from 2012 will mean for many people served by DDS. These cuts have a direct impact on families and the providers whose services are vital every day. There are a few things within the budget I would like to highlight:

1. ***We are happy to see that Governor Malloy has included funds in his budget for high school graduates and age-outs.*** These funds are vital to transition to adult services for individuals served by DDS. Without grad/age-out funds in place, young adults will have to wait months or years for vital services.
2. ***We are gratified to see that funds have been allocated for case management services to the Voluntary Services Program and for Autism services.*** It will be very important to protect these funds now and in the future as they represent supports to large under-served populations.
3. ***We are very concerned that funds for respite services and family grants are being cut.*** Families whose children have to wait until age 18 to receive case management services have very little supports to draw on from DDS. For many individuals and families, respite funds and respite centers, family grants and access to family support teams is the only intervention and assistance they have. A small grant to cover a few hours of respite care makes a huge difference for someone providing around the clock care. A grant of a few hundred dollars might purchase a piece of equipment otherwise unaffordable. The intervention of a behaviorist for a short term may provide just the right amount of support, training and information that prevents an emergency placement or a parent from giving up. These may seem like small cuts to you – but represent an enormous, sometimes life changing difference for a family.

Our family is here today to speak on behalf of many families like ours who cannot be present to tell their story. We appreciate that you have work to do in solving the large deficit Connecticut faces for the next two years. During this very difficult economic time it is understandable that there will be a fiscal impact on the state budget, programs and services in Connecticut. ***I urge you to exercise caution in relation to the vital programs and services that serve families raising children with disabilities and special health care needs.*** We ask that

you work to create a budget that ensures sufficient funds are allocated to DDS so it and the outstanding private providers who support individuals with disabilities can do their job. DDS and private providers work tirelessly to help individuals like Jamie. They have endured incredible cuts already, and are *at risk for an inability to provide safe and quality care*. We must work together – families, providers, DDS and policy makers – to ensure a future service system that individuals and families can count. Parents like us are ready to do our part, understand our responsibility and are committed to meeting the challenges ahead. However, we will need you to make a commitment to our son's future – and more importantly – to our daughters' ability to help him in the years to come.